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Memoir of the Life and Character of Walter Venning, ...

Richard Knill, London Society
for the Improvement of Prison Discipline

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MEMOIR

OF THE

Life and Character

OF

WALTER VENNING, ESQ.

A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE

Of the London Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, &c.

WHO DIED AT ST. PETERSBURG,

January 10th, 1821,

FROM A FEVER CONTRACTED IN VISITING ONE OF THE GAOLS OF THAT CITY.

BY RICHARD KNILL,

WITH A PREFACE BY

ROBERT WINTER, D.D.

"I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: Sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Matt. xxv. 35, 36.

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TO

THE ILLUSTRIOUS PATRON,

THE VICE-PRESIDENTS,

AND THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

OF THE

LONDON SOCIETY,

FOR

THE IMPROVEMENT OF PRISON DISCIPLINE,

AND FOR

THE REFORMATION OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS,

This Memoir

OF

WALTER VENNING, ESQ.

One of their most laborious and successful co-adjutors,

Is respectfully inscribed,

by their most obedient Servant,

RICHARD KNILL.

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PREFACE.

In introducing to the attention of the Reader, the Memoir of my highly valued friend Mr. Walter Venning, I am desirous of stating a few facts. My acquaintance with him commenced in the year 1810. Residing at that time in London, he became a constant attendant on my ministry. We had a few mutual friends of high respectability, from whom I received such attestations of his excellent character, as entirely confirmed the esteem, which I began to entertain for him.

At that period I had much interesting conversation with Mr. Venning, both on general and on religious subjects. His mind, bent on inquiry, was then much directed to the study of the Scriptures. His conscience was exceedingly susceptible and tender. He was ardently desirous of doing that which is right, and equally fearful of

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practical mistakes and errors. His convictions, his feelings, his decisions, were however increasingly and determinately on the side of religion. On the sixth of September, 1811, he entered on a profession of the gospel, by becoming a member of the christian society over which I have the honour to preside. That he was a serious Christian, appeared with satisfactory evidence before his reception in this community. But some considerable time had elapsed, before the more distinguishing features of his character began to be developed. From the commencement of his connection with the Church in NEW COURT, and indeed prior to that connection, he was generally remarked for uniformity and constancy of his attendance on all religious exercises, whether on the Sabbath, or in the week. And let it be observed, that where, under any pretence, these duties come to be superficially performed and frequently neglected, it is a melancholy proof, that the mind has received some mistaken bias which needs to be removed.

Indulged as I was with frequent opportunities

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of intimate converse with my now departed friend, I could not but be delighted to perceive the traces of the expansion of his mind under the influence of religious truth, with which his acquaintance was daily increasing, and to which his attachments became strong and permanent. It was not long before he perceived and felt the necessity of active exertions for the diffusion of the principles, which through the grace of God he had sincerely received. My esteemed friend, the Author of the ensuing Memoir, has in the nineteenth page so justly detailed this part of Mr. Venning's history, that it is not necessary to dwell upon it here. It will be sufficient to say that he became by degrees a very useful member of the Society with which he was immediately connected, while his exertions in co-operation with those of other excellent persons in different denominations of Christians, became extensively useful, while by a reaction, which could not but be happily felt, his views were expanded, and his faith established. Thus was the scriptural maxim beautifully and practically exemplified, "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand."

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When Mr. Venning last left England, in 1817, in company with a well known and highly estimable Missionary, Mr. Stallybrass, neither himself nor his friends contemplated a long absence from his native country; Providence however so ordered it, that it should be a final farewell. From that time to the day of his death, the subject of this Memoir was far better known to his excellent friends in St. Petersburg, than he could be to those whom he left at home. Their report, added to personal acquaintance, during the last few months of his life, has enabled my beloved Brother in the Christian Ministry, the Rev. Richard Knill, to present to public attention the contents of this interesting Volume. From the occasional correspondence, and from the testimony of writers, it was highly gratifying to us who loved him, to hear of the continued and active zeal and benevolence of our indefatigable friend. We hailed the expected period of his return, and were flattering ourselves, that in his presence and co-operation, we should find additional incentives to every work of faith and labour of love.——Alas! It was otherwise ordered by Him

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who doeth all things well. The circumstances which terminated in his speedy dissolution are minutely and accurately related in the ensuing pages.

It is my earnest wish and devout prayer, that the perusal of them may be the means of exciting in the minds of many, especially of the young, a holy emulation to follow in the path of piety and benevolence, this enlightened Christian Philanthropist, while his death, at an age not far exceeding that which was attained by the Son of God himself in human nature, tends to impress on the heart that memorable declaration, "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, in which no man can work."

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MEMOIR.

THE fond remembrance of departed worth often conducts us in imagination to the tombs, to renew our converse with the dead, and to place again before the mind those relatives and friends whom we shall see in this world no more. Hence the history of man has generally been considered the most interesting species of writing, and has been read by all ages with greater avidity than any other compositions. The history of a *good* man has peculiar advantages. It exhibits to us an individual of like passions with ourselves, passing through the various walks of life, enjoying its comforts, enduring its trials, and in all things acquitting himself in his true character. There he teaches us *how to live*. We follow him from the busy scenes of life to the solitude of the sick chamber. There he teaches us *how to suffer*. We accompany him to the entrance of the valley of the shadow of death, and beholding his acqui-

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escence in the will of God, and with what serenity he commits his spirit into the hands of his Redeemer, we learn the important lesson *how to die*—and as we retire from a scene so sacred, we are penetrated with the sentiment of the Prophet, and involuntarily exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his." Such was the life and such the death of Mr. WALTER VENNING. He was born at Totness in Devonshire, on the 15th of Nov. 1781. In that salubrious and beautiful neighbourhood he spent his early days, under the tender care and vigilant superintendence of his pious parents; whose devoted attachment to their youngest son made them ever solicitous to train him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

His father was engaged in commercial pursuits, and young Walter was educated with a view to the same honourable employment. With the fairest prospects he embarked on the ocean of commerce—a source of riches, of treasures, and of cares, unknown to strangers, by which many have risen to the most exalted stations in society, and by their wisdom, prudence, enterprize, and benevolence, have diffused unnumbered blessings to the most distant regions. But while many find the seat of commerce to be the seat of honour, of riches, and of usefulness there are others

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who find it a lofty pinnacle, from which they fall and dash themselves to pieces or a deceitful stream, whose current carries them imperceptibly into a vortex where they are lost for ever. This is peculiarly applicable to those interesting youths, who, with a noble intrepidity, quit their native shores to augment their fortunes.

Having set their foot on foreign land, removed from a father's watchful eye, the restraints of the parental roof are laid aside, and temptations, in a thousand varied forms, attack the juvenile stranger. Too often inevitable ruin is the result. All these things the subject of this Memoir witnessed. To all these allurements he was exposed, and after he became a Christian, he often said to his friends, with adoring gratitude, "*I can never praise God sufficiently for a religious education. It restrained me from vice, and kept me from ruin.*"

Before Mr. Venning had completed his eighteenth year he left England for St. Petersburg, where he remained for a considerable time, and uniformly acted with candour and integrity.

Long after his arrival in this splendid city, he could not join his youthful associates in their jovial festivities *on the Lord's day;* nor could he

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ever shake off, what is *profanely* called, "The prejudices of education," so as to run the same lengths of vice which many of his companions did. His principal restraint was his memory. With the rapidity of lightning and the force of an electric shock, memory presented to his mind the holy example and heavenly instructions of his honoured father. This operated as a constant check on him. Blessed example! Powerful instuctions! which could thus by the grace of God curb the impetuosity of youthful passions. What a mercy would it be for every son to have such a father. What parent can read it without emotions of joy. What an encouragement does example afford to pious parents to train up their offspring in the fear of God.

In the year 1807 he left St. Petersburg, but still he was a stranger to those cheering and animating prospects which arise from a participation of the mercy of God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Like the ancient inhabitants of Ephesus he he had been living "without hope and without God." It is not possible for the human mind to conceive a state more dangerous than this, although millions appear satisfied in it. Often had he felt the unsatisfying nature of worldly pleasures—their sapless, momentary evanescent joys could never fill his soul; but hap-

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pily for him he was returning to the land of his nativity, where he had friends who could direct him to the source of permanent and unutterable bliss.

Soon after his arrival in London he became deeply convinced of the necessity of a personal interest in the divine favour. About this time also his venerable father died, and the sacred tranquillity, the joyful hope, and delightful prospects, which the aged christian experienced on his dying bed, greatly strengthened his desires after that felicity which flows from genuine religion. He read and studied the sacred scriptures with real solicitude. He sought after truth like a man in earnest, and the Father of mercies did not let him seek in vain. His biographer is not able to state what particular means the Holy Spirit used to bring him out of darkness into marvellous light, but a beloved sister still recollects with what emotions he one day said to her, "*What good thing must I do, that I may inherit eternal life?*" She instantly replied, in the language of the Saviour, "*This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*" He paused and meditated, and appeared astonished at the simplicity of the plan of salvation: and from this period he gradually embraced the truths and consolations of the gospel.

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He was accustomed to speak with peculiar delight of that kind and gracious Providence which first led him to attend the preaching of the Rev. Doctor Winter, at New-Court, Carey-street; under whose judicious and edifying ministry he received those comprehensive and practical views of christianity which acted as a stimulus to him all his remaining days. In the autumn of 1811, he became a member of the church under Doctor Winter's pastoral care: and he ever retained a grateful sense of the advantages he derived from the labours of his pastor, and kept up a constant correspondence with him until his death. One of the last letters which Mr. Venning wrote, was to the Doctor, and it did not reach England until the writer of it had laid down his pen for ever. An extract from it will shew how steadily he kept eternity in view. "I look forward with pleasure, and hope to see my dear English friends next summer, but the vicissitudes of life and the uncertainty of life itself, especially in the work which engages all my time and attention, forbid me, at least for the present, to say much about it."

. . . . . .

The gospel enjoins activity. Christ is displeased when he sees men in a state of supineness, and calls to them, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." The brevity of life, the precariousness of health, and the unutterable value of the soul,

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all combine to enforce this injunction. Doctor Winter has studied the subject: hence it is a maxim in the polity of the Church over which he presides, *that all the Members shall, according to their ability, engage in some work of benevolence.* All have their appropriate spheres, and in order that all may be suitably engaged, there is a Sunday School—an Auxiliary Tract Society—and a Society for visiting and relieving the afflicted poor. Mr. Venning chose for his department to visit the abodes of sickness, and administer relief and comfort to the afflicted and dying. Surely if there be any thing worthy the name of humanity, it is this. Alas! how many pass by on the other side, without casting an eye on such misery, or stretching out their fingers to relieve it. So did not this good man. His religion breathed benevolence. His faith was an operative principle. He drank deeply into the spirit of his Master, "who went about doing good;" and by this means, his ear became familiar with the tale of woe—his tenderness and compassion increased, and his visits of mercy were unremitting. The habit of praying and conversing with the poor, the sick, and the dying, became the means of strengthening and employing his mind, and no doubt laid the basis of those more extensive exertions of disinterested benevolence which principally characterized the latter years of his

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life. It is impossible to say what happy effects have been produced by such means, but it is evident that to him they were of a most important nature. In this way he became acquainted with Christians of other Societies. Near the same bed side he often saw the Churchman and Dissenter, who while sympathising with a dying fellow creature, felt also an union of soul unknown before—and the spirit of the times, together with the numerous Christian Societies of the present day are peculiarly favourable to the advancement of such sacred friendships. Christians should hail the happy omen as an introduction to that glorious period, when the holy, peaceful, lovely spirit of the gospel shall pervade the whole creation.

In the year 1815 a Society was formed in London which greatly attracted his attention.*

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* Denominated the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, &c.
Patron,
H. R. H. The Duke of Gloucester, K. G.
Vice Presidents,
The Marquis of Buckingham—Marquis of Lansdown.
10 Earls—14 Lords, and all the others Baronets and Members of Parliament.
Chairman,
Sam. Hoare, Jun. Esqr.
And a Committee of 36 Gentlemen.

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The promoters of this Society were men of a kindred spirit with himself, and he entered so warmly into their plans that "much of his time was spent in visiting the Prisons of the Metropolis, endeavouring to impart religious knowledge to those who were confined in them." A singularly happy instance of the success of his labours greatly encouraged him, of which the following is the substance.

In one of the visits to the Prison in Cold Bath Fields, he perceived amidst the culprits a fine lad of engaging manners and prepossessing countenance. Being struck with his appearance, he inquired particularly into his case, and found after the most minute investigation, that he was imprisoned for the first offence. Anxious to snatch this juvenile offender from the jaws of ruin, he paid particular attention to him, giving him instruction, watching his conduct and looking for marks of contrition. In this he happily succeeded, and the lad was afterwards placed with a respectable tradesman in the Metropolis. His conduct with his Master has invariably proved that Mr. Venning was not mistaken. During his last stay at St. Petersburg, he received a letter from this youth, expressing all the feelings of a grateful heart to his benefactor and deliverer. The contents of this letter, together with the

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good conduct of the boy, amply repaid Mr. V. for all the toils he endured in the service of humanity. Had it not been for the timely aid of this good man, the poor youth might have associated with the hardened rebels who were confined in the same prison, and have been irretrievably lost.

This circumstance operated on Mr. Venning's mind in the most powerful manner, and so encouraged him, that when he was once inviting a young gentleman to engage in the same benevolent labours, he said to him, "*Only succeed in reclaiming one offender, and it will make you a prison man for ever.*

The genuine influence of Christianity expands the soul and breathes good will to every creature. Every person who was well acquainted with Mr. Venning, will acknowledge that he possessed this spirit. He was now completely according to his own phrase, "a prison man." Britain shared first in his compassion, but it was not confined there, he remembered that he was a member of the great family of man. He knew that God made of one flesh all the nations of the earth, and that every human being possesses an immortal spirit more precious than ten thousand worlds. While he mused on these things the fire kin-

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tlled—the land in which he had once resided came to his recollection, and he determined in the strength of the Lord to visit it again, to communicate what he had learned, and if possible, put in operation there, those plans which he had seen so efficient in England.

Russia was now the place of his destination. The beloved friends whom he left behind will never forget his parting interview. It was solemn and affectionate, but they little thought that they should see his face no more—So uncertain are all things here below. How necessary, how important, to be prepared for every event.

The ship in which our Philanthropist embarked weighed anchor at Gravesend, the 18th of May, 1817. His voyage was rendered highly interesting, by having as fellow passengers the Rev. Edward Stallybrass and Mrs. Stallybrass, who were going as Missionaries, to preach the unsearchable richesof Christ, to the Mongolian tribes in Siberia. In these amiable persons he perceived a combination of excellencies which he well knew how to appreciate. Their hopes and aims were one—ransomed by the same blood—quickened by the same Spirit—heirs of the same inheritance—and servants of the same Lord. He formed an attach-

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ment to them which they mutually cherished till death.

It is usual for ships bound to St. Petersburg to stop at Elsineur, and the passengers go on shore and remain there until the Captain is ready to sail; this is no loss of time to a person who has business to transact in every town. Accordingly on their arrival at this port Mr. Venning writes: "On Tuesday the 3d of June, I went on shore and set off for Copenhagen, *to see the prison*, but as it was not in order, I was refused admission until the following day. Mr. F. promised to procure me all the information necessary, and said to me, Two men were lately beheaded for breaking out of prison; prior to this no execution had been heard of. A new prison is now building more secure and more commodious, I was introduced to Mr. Foster,* and saw the prison."

While engaged in surveying the receptacle where those are kept who break the laws of man, he was not unmindful of those who break the laws of God. Another object attracted his attention, which deeply interested him, and which is of far more importance to Englishmen, than a

* British Consul at Copenhagen.

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new prison. "At Copenhagen," he writes, "there are one hundred thousand souls, but *no English church*, neither is there any at Elsineur." He did not insert this in his journal without a meaning. Some parents do not sufficiently consider what they are doing, when they send their children to places where they cannot hear the gospel. *What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul!* To what did righteous Lot expose himself when he chose the well watered plains of Jordan? His soul was vexed by the filthy conversation of his neighbours—his sons-in-law were burned to death—his property was all destroyed—his wife was turned into a pillar of salt—his daughters by the prevalence of evil example became abominable, and his grey hairs were brought down with sorrow to the grave.

Just one week after Mr. Venning had visited Copenhagen, he arrived safely at St. Petersburg. The ship had only a three weeks passage from England, and the time passed pleasantly, as they had the privilege of divine service every Lord's day. This was his fourth voyage to Russia, and although he intended only a short visit, yet various circumstances conspired to protract it." *One* reason was, the cordial reception which he met with from a near relative, whose mind he

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was most happy to find encreasingly opening to those great truths which he himself had received. *Another* was, the greatly improved state of religious Society in St. Petersburg. *A third,* in connexion with this, was the enlarged opening which he there perceived for all plans of promoting religion, through the wonderful exertions of the Bible Society. And the *fourth,* was, the opportunity of active usefulness which he found in his favorite employment of visiting prisons both in the metropolis and in other parts of the empire."

Ten years had elapsed since his last departure from Russia, and the vicissitudes which the hand of time had wrought among his acquaintance during that period made a deep impression on his mind. His reflections on this subject are too valuable to be lost—the reader will not be displeased by my inserting them. The words of a dying man are fitted to make a lasting impression on the mind of survivors, and he being dead yet speaketh; "An absence of ten years will convince any man of the ravages of time, infants are become boys—boys are grown up to men—and men are sinking into old age. Among these how many are cut off by death, *and even survivors confess that happiness is not to be found.* A few more changes will lay them and the writer too beneath the clods of the valley."

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Mr. Venning found that in order to facilitate the important measures which he had in view, it would be expedient for him to be select in the choice of his society, and he immediately attached himself to those who could enter into his views, and whose principles were similar to his own. By this means he was introduced to his Excellency Prince Alexander Galitzin, and many other persons of genuine piety and powerful influence, who were capable and desirous of forwarding his benevolent labours, and who actually did afford him every facility which he needed. His ardent spirit promptly seized such golden opportunities, and the rising and the setting sun often beheld him at his favourite employment. Perhaps few persons have attended more rigidly to the advice of the wise man, "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Eccles. ix. 10.

It appears that at the commencement of his labours his mind was touched with peculiar distress, because one whom he dearly loved was not pleased with his proceedings, and he unbosoms himself to a correspondent in the following manner, "U——— is hurt that any of my family should engage in an affair so mean as visiting pri-

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sons, and has asked me, very gravely, what I intend to do to such hardened villains?"—The ideas of thousands on this subject are exactly similar to what his friend had expressed. They think that a man who is confined in a jail for theft, or murder, is too debased—too far sunk in the scale of *being*—even to be spoken to. Certainly the wickedness of such criminals is very great. The idea that a fellow creature should be guilty of such horrid crimes is enough to make our blood run cold——but if the object of the prison society be to reclaim them—to lift them up from the degradation into which they are plunged, then surely it is truly laudable, and claims our cordial approbation and support. We think we can never sufficiently applaud the conduct of that humane physician, who ventures his life amidst the most fatal diseases, without any hope of reward, except what arises from the pleasure of doing good. But diseases of the body and diseases of the mind, will bear no comparison; therefore, those who seek to raise the tone of morals, and to banish crimes from the earth, deserve our highest praise.

The principal objects of the Prison Society may be expressed in this short but comprehensive sentence,

"To seek and to save that which was lost."

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During the last few years that Mr. Venning resided in England, he enjoyed an abundance of the means of grace; his religious connections were remarkable for keeping holy the sabbath day, and he did not forget it when far removed from them. The language of the Prophet, "Blessed is the man that keepeth my sabbath from polluting it," had a powerful effect upon his heart; hence *he never entered into company on this sacred day.* Some may wonder why such an incident is introduced, but pious people in Britain can form no idea of the dreadful profanation of the sabbath in foreign lands, by many of their countrymen.

The Imperial Court removed for a season to Moscow, and His Excellency Prince Galitzin, invited Mr. Venning thither to explore the prisons of that city. Rejoicing at the favourable opportunity, and having gained the consent of one of his countrymen, Mr. Thomas Rutt, to accompany him, he set off on the 11th of Feb. 1818, for Moscow. He thought little of the fatigue of a journey of 1400 versts, when the good of his fellow creatures were concerned.

In this city he was honoured by an interview with the Princess Mestchersky, who entered most decidedly into his views, and translated his

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Memorial into Russ, that it might be presented to the Prince Galitzin. The Princess Mestchersky, accompanied him in his first visit to the prisons of Moscow, and remained his warm supporter in all his benevolent labours.

After spending one whole year in this Empire, his grateful heart sets down the following memorial: "An uninterrupted state of health, so as not to prevent me on one occasion from visiting the prisons or attending to any engagement; although exposed to the severe frost of winter, and the no less dangerous heat of summer, *cannot be forgotten*, especially when I consider the weak state of my lungs when I left England, and the occasional spitting of blood to which I was subject."

It is an interesting sight to behold this devoted Christian disengaging himself from all secular concerns, and consecrating his whole time and property to the cause of suffering humanity: endeavouring by every means in his power to lighten the fetters, and mitigate the woes, of our unhappy fellow men. Such prodigies of benevolence are rarely seen, but that Mr. Venning was one of these prodigies is evident, from the following extract: "I assured Prince Galitzin, upon his giving me such encouragement, that I should

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think of nothing else besides prisons—I therefore deemed it necessary to decline all commercial business, and even to avoid the appearance of it, by not attending the Exchange."

His solicitude for the perfecting of his plan can only be known by those who have engaged in similar labours. But the time now drew near when his hopes were to be consummated, by seeing a Prison Society established in the Metropolis of the largest Empire in the world. The following representation will shew what a deep interest was excited on the occasion.

TRANSLATION.

"To His Imperial Majesty,
From the Minister of Spiritual Affairs and National Instruction, Privy Counsellor, &c.
PRINCE GALITZIN.

REPRESENTATION.

Mr. Venning, a Member of the London Prison Society, well known to your Imperial Majesty, presented a *Memorial*, containing general remarks, respecting the best system of prison discipline; with a description of the plan upon which the London Society proceeded in its management

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of prisons. In consequence of this, agreeably to the command of your Majesty, I have had conferences with him as to the manner in which a Society formed upon similar principles and adapted to the Constitution, might be instituted in Russia. Accordingly, rules were framed for the establishment of a Society in this City, for the care of prisons; these rules which I had the honour previously to present for the inspection of your Majesty, I sent agreeably to your commands to the Military General Governor of the City, requesting to know his sentiments on the subject.

The General of Infantry, Count Meloradovitch, the Governor, returned them to me, with the declaration, not only, that he found in the rules nothing whatever objectionable, but he considered that the establishment of such a Society, founded on such principles, would prove very beneficial. Accordingly, I herewith present a Memorial drawn up from the remarks of Mr. Venning, on the subject of prison discipline, and the proposed plan of a Society for the care of prisons; and I beg leave to implore your Majesty's confirmation of them, in order that they may forthwith be carried into execution.

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In conformity with the Rules, I now submit to your Majesty, to appoint a President to this Society, according to your pleasure."

(Signed)

PRINCE ALEXANDER GALITZIN.

St. Petersburg, July 19, 1810.

The original is signed in his Imperial Majesty's own hand writing. " Be it so, and in the following manner: I appoint the Minister of Spiritual Affairs, and National Instruction, Prince Galitzin, the President.

ALEXANDER."

The Illustrious President immediately ordered the cheering news to be made known to Mr. Venning, and he lost no time in conveying it to his friends in England. On the 25th July, 1818, he writes to Samuel Hoare, Junr. Esq. " I have now to communicate to you, and our London Prison Society, the following important and welcome intelligence.

" His Imperial Majesty, whose heart is ever alive to the best feelings of our nature, has been graciously pleased to establish a Prison Society in this City, on the plan I had the honour to recommend about eighteen months ago. It was con-

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firmed and ratified last Saturday by the Emperor. This Society is denominated, "The Society for the care of Prisons." There are two Committees, one of Gentlemen, and the other of Ladies. The lists of persons whose names I ventured, by permission, to propose as Members of these Committees, have been all approved by his Majesty—and if rank and dignity both civil and ecclesiastical, combined with active benevolence, will give efficacy to their labours, none of these qualifications will be wanting.

"His Imperial Majesty, who has most wisely reserved to himself the exclusive right of choosing the President, has been pleased to appoint the pious Prince Galitzin, who is, I may truly say, no less dignified by his humanity and other christian virtues, than by his exalted rank and station—and allow me to add, that this is a just tribute of praise which I pay not to the rank but to the man. His Majesty has been graciously pleased to place this Institution, of which he himself is Patron, under the Prince's immediate paternal care.

"Whatever funds this Society may require for the execution of its benevolent objects, his Majesty will provide.

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"The adoption of this plan is the result of the most mature deliberation, and although the time which the Emperor and his Government have bestowed may appear long to the feelings of humanity, yet as the magnitude and importance of the plan demanded the most profound consideration, it cannot be regretted or regarded as lost—as it must have produced a sounder conviction of what I consider an incontrovertible principle, *that the bonds of society can be strengthened by those measures only, which are founded on christian principles, of justice, love, and humanity.*

"The establishment of this Society in the Russian metropolis, with the authority and sanction of the Emperor and his Government, will soon be followed by the formation of similar Institutions throughout the territory of this extensive empire; and what will greatly tend to facilitate the accomplishment of the great design, namely, the suppression of crime and the reformation of the criminal, is, that the new prisons which are now erecting in the various Government towns in Russia, will be so constructed as to admit the introduction of those moral and religious instruments of reformation, which are contained in the Memorial first submitted.

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" His Excellency the President has made the first visit to the Great Town Prison since the establishment of the Society. He was much pleased at finding the juvenile offenders separated from the men, and he entertained hopes of the reformation of some of the boys whom he found in tears. The Prince has kindly offered his mansion for the place of our Meetings, and he assured me this morning that he would occupy the chair as often as his other important occupations would admit.

" The good that has already been accomplished in the prisons in Russia vanishes in my mind, when I look forward to the glorious prospect that is opened, by the great and good example which has been set by the Emperor Alexander, to surrounding nations: and it must be considered a happy coincidence of circumstances when we reflect that the persons who are best qualified to carry these benevolent plans into execution are every where to be found. The agents of the British and Foreign Bible Society, have already assembled the excellent of the earth, in almost every country and town in Europe; and in the Promoters of that sacred cause, we are sure to find the friends of humanity who are no less able than willing to promote the Prison cause, with as much zeal as if it were their own.

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"I cannot conclude this Letter without expressing my gratitude to the Great and Merciful Disposer of all events, who has been pleased thus to smile on my feeble endeavours in the Prison cause, and to crown them all with signal success. So remarkably have the leadings of Providence been accompanied with the divine blessing in my own experience, that were the whole world combined to deride me for it, I would still admire and adore the directing hand of God."

This interesting epistle was quickly followed by another still more interesting. It is addressed to Samuel Hoare, Junr. Esq. dated St. Petersburg, 15th October, N. S. 1819.

"My dear friend,—By the blessing of God, the first General Meeting of the Members of both Committees of the Society for the care of Prisons, was held in this City, on Saturday last, when we were assembled at ten o'clock in the morning, at the residence of the President, Prince Alexander Galitzin.

"The day of our Meeting was very remarkable, it being that very day six years when the French were driven out of Moscow. The apartment in which we sat was hung round with the portraits of the most distinguished characters of

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the country, both Statesmen and Generals, among whom I observed the brave Field Marshal Kutusoff, whose amiable daughter Mrs. Tolstoy, will I expect soon prove to be a second Mrs. Fry.*

" The rules were first read, and the following Vice-Presidents were chosen :

" His Eminence the Metropolitan Michael, of Novogorod and St. Petersburg.—His Eminence Philaret, the Archbishop of Twer.—His Excellency Count Lieven, Lieutenant-General, Curator of the University of Dorpat, and President of the Lutheran General Consistory.—His Excellency Baron Vittenghoff, Privy Counsellor.

" Members of the Committee of Gentlemen are as follow :—His Excellency Prince Peter Mestchersky.—Major General Leontioff.—His Excellency B. Papof, actual Counsellor of State.—His Excellency D'junskoffsky, actual Counsellor of State.—His Excellency Magnitsky, actual

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* An English Lady who has eminently distinguished herself in the Prison Cause, and God has been pleased to crown her endeavours with amazing success.

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Counsellor of State.—His Excellency Hablitz, Counsellor at Court.—His Excellency Stehr, Counsellor of State.—His Excellency Pezerovious, Counsellor of State.—His Excellency Galakof, Counsellor of State.—Mr. Pilitzky, Mr. Hershelman, Mr. Singbush, Doctor Paterson, Doctor Pinkerton, and myself.

"Treasurer, John Venning; Baron Bronon Foreign Secretary; Mr. Scroff, Home Secretary; Collector, John Parland, Esq. Members of the Committee."

PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES' COMMITTEE.

"Her Excellency Mrs. Kasadavloff, widow of the late Minister of State for the Interior.

"MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

"Her Excellency Princess Mestchersky.—Her Excellency Mrs. Stolstay.—Her Excellency Princess Galitzin.—Her Excellency Princess Sherbatoff.—Her Excellency Princess Tronbetskoy.—Mrs. Paterson, Mrs. Bacheracht, Mrs. Pezerovious, and Mrs. Venning.

"The Prince Galitzin read an admirable Report giving an account of the formation of our

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London Society: a detailed account of the labours of Mrs. Fry, and her Committee in Newgate, with a description of some of the best prisons in England, extracted from Mr. Buxton's admirable essay; likewise an account of the Prison Societies in France and America—and among other interesting particulars the case of that reformed individual E. L. was not forgotten. The letter which I received from him in which he tells me that Mr. Peter Bedford, had been to him a father and a brother, was read by the Prince, and excited feelings which did honour to the assembly.

"His Excellency Mr. Papof rose, and read the letter from H. R. H. the Duke of Gloucester, which was heard with great attention, and a reply will very soon be made to it by the President.

"The Prince addressed the Meeting in a most interesting and pathetic manner on behalf of the miserable and the guilty; and he opened a subscription at once for their relief, by giving his name with a donation of one thousand rubles, and five hundred rubles annually.

"All the Vice-Presidents and Members, both Ladies and Gentlemen, followed his noble example, and 9,200 rubles were immediately raised.

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" All the Members were divided into Sub-Committees of inspection, &c. All were anxious to be employed in some way or other in this benevolent work, and the truly pious Mrs. Kazadavloff, actually engaged me with tears in her eyes to go with her into the prisons, where she says with the blessing of God, she will endeavour to do some good. The prospect of being so benevolently employed has cheered her spirits, which had been greatly depressed by the decease of her late husband.

" The ship is just come in which I suppose has brought the tablet of the likeness of *Howard* for the Emperor.

" I have now made up my mind to pass this winter in Russia, as it bids fair to be the most *active* and the most *happy* of my life."

In the foregoing letter Mr. Venning says that the Prince addressed the Meeting in a most interesting and pathetic manner. No doubt the original must have been very touching, for the *translation* bears evident marks of it, as the reader will immediately perceive.

" Ladies and Gentlemen,

" Let us go into these gloomy abodes, where

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sin, appearing in all its ruinous consequences, is only deprived of the power of multiplying the deeds proceeding from a corrupted will—where crimes, the progeny of violent passions, and dissolute habits, have only lost the opportunity of darting their venom;—where ignorance, levity, idleness, carelessness, and above all forgetfulness of God, and dislike of his commandments, assume their various shapes of temptation and transgression;—where the breakers of the laws of God and man await the sentence which fixes their destiny for the remainder of life.

"The hand of *justice* can only restrain for a time the outbreaking of their wickedness: but to the Society for the care of prisons is confided the work of *mercy*. *Justice* frees the civil community from these degraded members of it, and furnishes for the security of the good and for the intimidation of the bad. *Mercy* seeks to alleviate the condition of these criminals who have reduced themselves to the state of outcasts from society; she seeks to restore them to those paths of virtue from which they have wandered—seeks to inspire them with the love of the pure light of the doctrines of the gospel—seeks to rouse up the voice of their slumbering conscience—she seeks *to turn them to Christ the Saviour*, and says to the prisoners, "Go forth," to them that are in darkness,

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" Show yourselves." Mercy exerts herself to bring back from among those outcasts, at least some, who were lost to society, and even dead to it, and to restore them to the circles of the orderly, the useful and the good.

" However small may be the success of this beneficent attempt, yet even the attempt is well pleasing to our Lord and Saviour, and we know from the word of God that " he who turneth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." We know also " that in heaven there is joy over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." But even apart from this, the establishment of good order among the prisoners, the introduction of useful labour, the care of their health, and the provision of necessary sustenance, the words of consolation and encouragement in the hour of sadness and affliction, the very manifestation of a sincere compassion toward them in their unfortunate condition ; are not all these works of christian love, binding upon us by the example and injunction of Christ? " I was sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me."

" To this work we are appointed by the will

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of the Monarch himself, who is animated by the love which is inspired by our heavenly Father, who makes his sun to shine upon the evil and on the good, and sends his rain upon the just and unjust; even that love that moved our Saviour to pray for his very betrayers and murderers. In this work we shall doubtless meet with the cordial aid of our fellow-countrymen always ready to ease the galling chains of imprisonment."

These proceedings fully prove that the Russian Government placed the fullest confidence in the integrity of Mr. Venning, and that they also appreciated the advantages which would result from his truly christian labours. This often called forth the grateful aspirations of his bosom to that glorious Being who thus honoured him. But it was not among strangers only that his character was known and valued. In the commencement of the year 1820 he received a letter from one of his Countrymen, a Gentleman of high respectability, in which says Mr. V. " He expresses a particular desire to be useful in assisting Debtors, and the Poor; and requests me to call on him. Accordingly I waited on him the following day, when he gave me *a thousand rubles* to be distributed to whom and in what manner I may think proper."

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In the midst of these active and laborious services for strangers, he was stopped for a moment to sympathize with distresses in the circle of his dearest friends. It pleased the Almighty to visit him with a severe family affliction, which touched all the strings of his affectionate heart, and which terminated in the death of his nephew, Mr. John Venning. This interesting youth had been sent by his beloved parents in London, to reside with his uncle John Venning, Esq. in St. Petersburg.

Some time before the commencement of his last illness, he had read the Scriptures with great attention, and entered into the spirit of personal religion, while all his hopes of acceptance in this world, and in the world to come, rested on the merits and sacrifice of the Son of God.

An extract from Mr. V.'s journal will be the best explanation:

"Wednesday 24th March, 1820, my dear nephew John died. In a conversation I had with him, in which I expressed a hope that he thought of the Saviour, he replied, "Yes I do very often." I asked, "Do you look to him?" Yes, said he, "I look to him for every thing."—"He can comfort you," I added. "Yes," he replied, "He is the only person who can—I do pray to

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him." I then said to him, "Do you love the Saviour?" he answered, "Yes, I hope I do." "Do you feel the comforts of religion?" Yes, very much." After this I said to him, "Your uncle John and I pray for you, don't you wish it?" "Yes, to be sure I do, and I pray for every one of you." My brother then said, "Christ is the only refuge;" to which he replied, "He is the only refuge, in this world, and the next." His last words were, "*Pray with me,*" which he distinctly and audibly said, after having made a great effort to speak."

This short extract must be very consolatary to those dear relatives whom he has left behind. The plain but important questions of the uncle evidently shew on what his hopes were built; and the artless but striking answers of the nephew exhibit a mind deeply penetrated with the unutterable value of a Saviour, in that solemn moment when every other refuge fails.

It was the will of God, that the pious uncle should soon follow his beloved nephew. They died within a few months of each other, and are now lying side by side in the Smolensky burying ground, on Williams' Island.

It is remarkable in the history of Mr. Venning;

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that scarcely any thing which he undertook failed of its accomplishment. In this particular he was more highly favoured than most other Philanthropists. His friends often viewed it as a wonderful proof of the loving kindness of him who said, "Him that honoureth me I will honour." One morning he was informed of a young English female, about twenty years of age, who had been seduced from the bosom of her friends, and brought to this country, in the service of sin. The poor unfortunate creature soon found that "the way of transgressors is hard." Her constitution being impaired by disease, she was cast off by the man who ought to have been her protector, and left to suffer, to famish, and to die. He immediately communicated this affecting news to a friend who accompanied him to the place of wretchedness where the unhappy sufferer lay, and the scene which presented itself to them is better conceived than described. The young woman was instantly removed, and placed under the care of a pious family, who being exceedingly grieved to behold such extreme distress, shewed her every kindness. With this family she still resides, weak and emaciated—just tottering on the brink of the grave, but with the cheering hope that she has obtained the remission of her sins, through the merit of a Redeemer. O! with what ineffable delight must the glorified spirit

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of Walter Venning look down from its exalted state, to behold this poor young woman seeking that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled. With what rapture must he praise the eternal God, for making him the instrument of such blessedness to his fellow creatures! And ought not these things to stimulate survivors to imitate his bright example! Some marble-hearted monsters, might hear of this act with little emotion, but the individual who makes his calculation according to the rule of the Apostle James, in the last verse of his epistle, will read it with gratitude and delight.

It is hardly probable that any of that class of men who may properly be called, "*Seducers*," will read the life of such a holy man as the subject of this Memoir; but if peradventure it should fall into their hands, ought they not to shudder while reading the above? Might not the seducer behold a picture of the same distress that he has brought on some poor helpless female? And will he venture to proceed and read *more* of the cursed effects which flow from his unhallowed conduct—for seduction in its very nature involves *fraud of the worst kind.* It is probably always accomplished by means of the most solemn promises, and often, with oaths more solemn.

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Both the promises and the oaths, however, are violated in a manner supremely profligate and shameful. The objects to which they are directed are base, malignant and treacherous in the extreme; and the manner in which it is perpetrated is marked with the same treachery and baseness. He who can coolly adopt it, has put off the character of a *man*, and put on that of a *fiend;* and with the spirit of a fiend alone, he pursues and accomplishes the infernal purpose. The ruin sought and achieved is immense. It is not the filching of property. It is not the burning of a house. It is not the deprivation of liberty. It is not the destruction of life. The seducer plunders the wretched victim of character, morals, happiness, hope, and heaven:—and enthrals her in the bondage of sin. With the same comprehensive and terrible malignity *he destroys himself;* calls down upon his own head the vengeance of that Almighty hand which will suffer no sinner to escape; and awakens the terrors of that undying conscience which will enhance even the agonies of perdition. All this is perpetrated in the mean time under strong professions of peculiar affection—with the persuasive language of tenderness, and with the smiles of gentleness and complacency. For the seducer

"Can smile, and smile, and be a villain."

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Amidst a population of four or five hundred thousand there will always be a great number whose situation is very deplorable. Misery, with a thousand voices, addresses all the sympathies of our nature, and she cannot be sent away without a blessing. Perhaps St. Petersburg knows nothing of that pinching starving poverty which is felt in some large cities of other nations. The very lower orders in Russia seldom want food, what they usually eat can be procured at a low rate, and if one poor man is really in distress, his neighbour will help him. The benevolence of the poor to one another is almost unparalleled: and yet even in St. Petersburg a man who is truly alive to the necessities of his fellow creatures, will find ample scope for his most enlarged compassion. His head, and heart, and hand, and tongue, will be completely occupied. I have perceived this particularly in perusing the numerous papers which have passed under my review while preparing this Memoir. It is almost impossible to conceive what a variety of cases came before this excellent man, and each of them met with proper attention. He appears to have entered warmly into the spirit of that injunction of his divine Master, "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away."

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A few instances as a specimen, copied from a page of one of his pocket memorandum-books, may be gratifying to his friends, and may afford a *hint* to some of the opulent who still survive him.

	Rubles
Lent A. B.	100
Gave M—— whose husband is an old man of 70	10
Clothes for J. and his wife and child	50
Mrs. M., whose child is sick	25
B. G. who is very ill	5
Widow of the Executor of the prison	10
S. K. a debtor in the prison at Cronstadt	60
Some poor Exiles to Siberia	5
A prisoner in the Gubernsky	25
Captain M.	25
Towards the release of a Female prisoner	100

Then follows a case of a peculiarly touching nature. A widow and her children relieved from the most painful situation by his timely and persevering aid. The following letter is a copy of that which he wrote to his Excellency General Papof on the subject:

" My dear friend,

Enclosed is the receipt of the widow S. and

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her children for two thousand three hundred and sixty-two rubles, and ninety kopeeks, and I thank your Excellency for affording me the pleasure (although you had the trouble of getting it) of paying this sum into their own hands. And I take this opportunity of acknowledging the great obligations of love, which I feel toward our dear Prince Galitzin, and yourself, for relieving a poor but very respectable widow and children, and saving them not only from want, but also from a prison, of which they were in danger.

. . . . . .

I remain, my dear friend,
affectionately yours,
W. V."

. . . . . .

Let not the Reader for a moment imagine that these things are introduced with a design to represent Mr. Venning, as a man of perfect character, nothing would have been more abhorrent to his feelings. He watched and studied the human heart, and was well acquainted with its dreadful depravity. He often detected its departures from God, and mourned over such departures: and every person who is accustomed to this painful, but important duty, will find it easy to say with an ancient King " I have seen an end to all perfection." One of the most useful aphorisms which dropped from the lips of a heathen sage

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is, "Man know thyself;" and the great teacher of mankind, even Christ himself, strictly enjoined his disciples to watch and pray that they enter not into temptation. The heart is perpetually prone to sin, therefore what was so needful for Peter, and James, and John, in the garden of Gethsemane, is needful for every man, in every place, and on all occasions. That man who says his heart is good, can never have searched it, and watched it. But watchfulness is one grand part of the Christian's duty, and with this is intimately connected self-examination: And O! if prayer, and watchfulness, and examination, be neglected, or cursorily performed, what dreadful consequences follow! The individual who has been thus unmindful of his own personal felicity, will be astonished when he comes to himself, when he takes a retrospect of the weeks that have thus passed,—he will be astonished, to find even on a moderate computation, what a large portion of his thoughts have been occupied on things that are sinful. Behold an instance of it, in one of the most irreproachable men that the world has produced. While his friends were looking at him with delight, as eye-witnesses of his indefatigable zeal in the cause of benevolence; and others were looking at him with a sneer as being "righteous overmuch;" I see him retired into his closet—entering into the solitude of his bosom,

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developing those springs which are hidden from the eye of mortals—and trying himself by the unerring standard of God's holy word. The scrutiny is solemn—The decision truly humiliating—Let us read it, as written by himself, by a hand now motionless in the grave.

" I was led this morning to the contemplation of Isaiah, chap. 38, in which it appears that Hezekiah recorded his thoughts during his sickness, as I have just done some of mine. Perhaps my sickness was a punishment for sin—a want of watchfulness and running into temptation. Evil, if not resisted, will bring me into captivity, slavery, and death. *The tempter finds me too often idle.* Wicked men are his instruments, who assist him in the temptation and ruin of others. I have relaxed in *secret devotion* and watchfulness. Slothfulness is habitual to me. I *may* fall into the greatest sins—this is certain. O Lord, "lead us not into temptation." I have now a strong conviction of the absolute necessity of keeping at a distance from *temptation.* A true Christian trembles at its entering into his heart, like a man discovering for the first time the symptoms of a malignant fever, and he beseeches the protection of God. He is like a man partially recovered from a dangerous sickness, and who is afraid of a relapse—sin has still too easy access to his heart.

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Shall he then be *careless* or *indolent*? Shall he not much rather watch and pray? Ah! *I have been off my guard.* I have been in imminent danger. My thoughts and affections have been defiled. I know not the extent of evil I have done. Too much love of wine, and luxurious living. I feel like a person who has been on the brink of a precipice. Give me not up, O Lord, to my own heart's lust. It shews me what I am—weakness and wickedness: may it promote watchfulness and dependence on grace alone. No temptation can assault me without God's permission; blessed be thy name, for opening my eyes to see my danger. If God is pleased to bring me out of this guilty, indolent, prayerless, lustful state, I desire to give him all the glory. *Earlier rising absolutely necessary.* Watchfulness and prayer—the former at all times, the latter at stated intervals; and having so much time at my disposal I ought to *fix the hours* for morning and evening devotion, which should on no account whatever be omitted, and a chapter or a psalm attentively read."

If I mistake not, this extract ought to be written in letters of gold. Perhaps there is scarcely an individual in the universe, but might find something like it in the operations of his own mind—and like a beautiful mirror, it would

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exhibit to him the sure and only remedy for removing a malady so fatal. May all who read it be led thereby to greater watchfulness—to more earnest prayer—to a more simple dependence on the grace of God, and doubtless their happiness will increase and abound."

As sloth had been so much deprecated by Mr. Venning, in this extract, we naturally expect to find him active in future, and we shall not be disappointed. He determined to labour for God. I pity the man who has nothing to do—or who *thinks* he has nothing to do. Satan finds little opposition in that person's bosom.

Cronstadt was now the place which attracted the attention of this generous friend, and in order to execute his designs, he addressed the following letter to His Excellency the Prince Galitzin :

" One of the benevolent objects of the Prison Society, established in this city, is the extension of its usefulness by the formation of similar institutions in other places—and as Cronstadt is one of those towns in which there are many of those forgotten outcasts of society who are the subjects of guilt, and the victims of poverty and sickness, I feel desirous of visiting them

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with the delightful prospect of forming a prison Committee there, in connection with, and subject to the Parent Society; and it must be considered a happy circumstance that we are sure to find the friends of humanity there, well qualified to carry the objects of the Prison Society into effect; as they are now to be found in every town where a Bible Society has been instituted."

"If your Excellency will have the goodness to procure me his Imperial Majesty's gracious permission to visit the prisons of Cronstadt, I will cheerfully undertake it, and report my observations thereon to your Excellency."

W. V.

"*St. Petersburg, 27th Feb.* 1820."

Having thus paved the way, he was not long prevented from his purpose, for on the 10th of March, he received His Imperial Majesty's sanction, accompanied by a letter from the Prince to the Military Governor at Cronstadt, requesting him to give Mr. Venning free admission into all the places of confinement, for the necessary purpose of inspecting them: and also, to grant him all possible assistance in the formation of a Prison Committee. This intelligence greatly delighted him, and caused him to feel

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the meaning of that Scripture which says, "The favour of a king is as the dew upon the grass." He had long known that pleasure is augmented by communication, and he again tried the experiments by immediately addressing a friend in the following lines:

"His Imperial Majesty, whose heart is full of that tenderness and humanity, which is the very cement of society, and whose ear is ever open to the cry of misery, especially when it proceeds from those who are prevented from presenting themselves to the eye of pity, has been graciously pleased to grant his consent, for me to visit the prisons at Cronstadt. I will therefore embrace the first opportunity of going thither, but at present the communication is interrupted by the floating ice.

"In consulting the annals of Russia, which our Committee have done, it appears that works of love and mercy always did, and do still, constitute a distinct characteristic of this people. A few specimens may not be uninteresting.

"Makarius, metropolitan of all Russia, at the marriage of Emperor John Basilevitch, with the Empress Anastatia, in his speech to him said; act towards the needy chiefly with mercy,

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protect the widow, the orphan, and the injured, and visit those who are confined in prison."

"Boyarin Sheremitof, was also well known for his works of mercy. He employed all his fortune for this purpose, and when the Emperor asked, "Where have you spent your property?" He replied, "I spent it with the poor of this world."

"The Emperor Alexius Michaelovich, father of Peter the Great, visited the prisons in plain attire, once every year, pardoned trivial offenders, and sent them bread from his own table. His two wives imitated his philanthropic example. The first Empress Maria, apropriated great sums to the redemption of prisoners. The second Empress Natalia, satisfied all the wants of the prisoners and hospitals by her presents—visited them during the night, and, with her own hands, distributed to the indigent ready made clothes.

"In a former letter, it was my painful duty to announce to you what a severe loss the Ladies' Committee has sustained, in the decease of my much esteemed friend Mrs. Paterson. Her last words were, "In my father's house are many mansions," John xiv. 2. She expired without

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a groan, and without a sigh. Doctor Paterson and some friends were present when she died. On observing that she was near her end, they all kneeled down by her bed side and prayed, committing her departing spirit unto the Lord, whom she dearly loved. The Doctor was enabled to pray, and to give her up with much resignation and submission to the divine will.

Mrs. P. though unable to speak, appeared to be quite sensible to the last, and to take an interest in the prayer. Her sphere of usefulness had been enlarged by her becoming a member of the Prison Society, in which she took a very active part. I have lost a near and dear friend, and so has the church on earth; but her gain is unspeakably great.

"*Now*, I must announce to you the affecting account of the death of Mrs. Kazadavloff, the President of the Ladies' Committee."

"This truly excellent woman had a presentiment that she should die on the birth day of her husband, *which she did*. She mentioned it to a friend five days before her dissolution. *Her hope in Christ had disarmed death of all its terrors*. She seemed rather to wish to die that she might be with our common Lord and Saviour.

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I shall not soon forget her kindness to the prisoners, or the friendship with which she honoured me. I had the honour of accompanying her Excellency in her first visits to the prisons, in which a very affecting scene took place between this lady and the female prisoners. She began by addressing them in the most tender and affecting manner. She told them, with tears, that she came there to do them good, to feed, to clothe, and to instruct them in their moral duties, and that she would often repeat her visits. They were astonished at her kindness, and although they were ignorant who she was, yet by her attendants they must have been convinced that she was a person high in rank; they immediately threw themselves at her feet, but she gently reproved them, and forbade them to do so again, telling them that such a posture was only becoming to their Creator—and that they might not over estimate her kindness, she informed them that her visit was only an act of duty, and it was at the will and pleasure of her Sovereign, who had appointed her to this work of mercy, and to him their thanks were due.

" On hearing this, the prisoners burst into tears, and the good old lady wept with them. After this she proposed that they should be employed, to which they all agreed most cheerfully;

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and accordingly they have been supplied with materials, needles, thread, &c. One of the best behaved of the women was selected and appointed superintendent. The young women who could not read were placed under the care of an elderly prisoner, who promised to instruct them. Others whose offences were slight, were recommended to mercy: and her Excellency sent them all a good dinner the next day from her own kitchen. We should prove to criminals that we are their real friends, by actions which they can understand and feel; and although they have been little accustomed to kindness, yet they are not, on this account, less sensible of it. By this means their hearts have been softened and won, and their minds rendered tractable, in a way which the severity of punishment never would have produced."

The loss sustained by the death of these two pious ladies could not be but felt by one who took such a lively interest in every thing relative to the temporal and spiritual happiness of the prisoners; yet the loss did not discourage him; it only made him summon up new energies, and labour with redoubled diligence. How different is this from the conduct of thousands! The moment a beloved friend departs this life, the survivors hasten from the spot whence the spirit took

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its flight, as if the sum total of all their comforts and usefulness were buried in the grave. If this be fashionable, surely it is not scriptural. When a real Christian dies, it is to be for ever with the Lord. It is only a departure from the abodes of sorrow, and sickness, and death, to dwell in his presence, where is fullness of joy. It is only the fulfilment of that promise of the Saviour, "I will come again, and take you unto myself, that where I am, ye may be also." Nature cannot but weep at the painful separation, but our tears should be for ourselves; the departed saint looks down and says, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I go unto the Father." Instead of fleeing from the post of active duty, we should rather endeavour to fill up the vacuum which death has occasioned. Those who are departed have bequeathed to us their labours. Our sphere of action is enlarged. The calls for our exertion become more abundant, and a voice from their tomb addresses us, saying, "Work while it is called to-day." In this way Mr. Venning acted, he listened to the voice—he obeyed the command—and as soon as the fervent rays of the sun had removed the ice from the Gulph of Finland, he visited Cronstadt, and inspected the prisons. He was exceedingly gratified to find the hospital in such excellent order, and reported the same favourable account of it which that great

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man, Howard had done nearly half a century before.

A short time after this he wrote to a dear friend in the following animating manner. " This Society here is going on well. Much good is doing. Although many of the Members are at their country seats, and others are travelling, yet the few who remain seem to be taking a laudable advantage of their absence by doing all the good they can. The Princess Mestchersky leaves the Taurida Palace I am informed every day, to read a portion of the Scriptures to the female prisoners, and to supply them with work, &c. * And there are others who are not unmindful of them.

" My young friend Saisang Badma, chief of the Charnagay tribe, who is come nearly five thousand miles for a translation of the New Testament in his own language, has lately applied

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* Some minds are so happily formed that the moment they discover an evil they are prompted to seek a remedy. Every string of their heart seems made of compassion. This is eminently the case with the good Princess Mestchersky, who being an elegant English scholar, has translated great numbers of English Tracts into her native language, many hundred thousand copies of which have been printed, and are now circulating over the vast regions of the Russian Empire.

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to me for some Russian Tracts suitable to prisoners, which he will send to his own country; and he gives me reason to hope that some good will be done with them, by a Tartar Prince among the Mongolians on the frontiers of China. For a more particular account of this excellent young nobleman, I must refer you to the Missionary Register for January 1818.

"I have visited the prisons of Cronstadt, and have as usual given in a true and faithful account of the state of the prisons, and the condition of the prisoners and exiles; for I agree with our friend Buxton, that to conceal from the lawful authorities, who have the power of correcting what is amiss, is to participate.

"I also inspected the navy hospital, which contained 1365 sailors. I went through all the wards, and the appearance of all the sick was such as to satisfy my mind that the greatest care and attention are paid to them.

"July 6, 1820. His excellency Mr. Papof, sent me word of his Majesty's pleasure to have an Auxiliary Prison Society at Cronstadt. This is joyful news to me indeed, and so it will be to the Prison Society in London."

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In the course of the following week he received a letter from the Treasurer of the Bible Society at Cronstadt, announcing the formation of a prison Committee in that place, and also requesting his presence at the first general meeting. The interesting transactions of that day shall be given in his own words:

"An Auxiliary Prison Committee is established at Cronstadt under the sanction and by the appointment of the Emperor.

"It consists of the following benevolent persons:

His Excellency Vice-Admiral M. P. Korabka, Chairman.
His Excellency K. E. Melius, Counsellor of State and Physician.
F. H. Kreidner, Counsellor of State.
Mr. Berlofsky.
Counsellor M. E. Orloff, Treasurer.
Mr. Podosinoff, Secretary.

"Last Thursday, the 22d July 1820, being the birth-day of Her Majesty the Dowager Empress, the Committee was opened. Mr. Papof and myself being previously invited to assist at their first meeting, it was thought necessary that we should be in Cronstadt the day before, which we accord-

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ingly were, though at some risk; for we had to proceed against a violent wind which blew so hard that the steam boat that carried us could with difficulty act upon the waves. My truly excellent and pious friend observed, when we were starting, that *if this had been a mere party of pleasure he should be afraid to venture, but that in so good a cause he could dismiss all his fears and trust himself to a protecting Providence.* This warm-hearted Christian lately received a star, but if he were dressed in rags, instead of being decorated with orders, he would be a Prince.

" Prior to the meeting, which was was held at twelve o'clock, we visited all the prisons and the Lazaretto; I was much pleased to find them cleaner than when I first saw them. The walls had been whitewashed—the floors scraped—and consequently the air was less offensive; other things which I had noticed in my Report, were corrected. The general appearance of the prisoners was healthy, and their allowance of bread sufficient—each man receives three pounds daily.

" Most of the prisoners, I supplied with religious tracts, which had been selected and translated by my much respected friend the Princess Mestchersky.

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"The large and elegant Hall in which we met, was at the appointed hour filled with naval officers; and the orchestra contained companies of *sailors*, who were permitted to come, *being all members of the Cronstadt Bible Society*—a circumstance, which to my mind rendered their appearance peculiarly pleasing.

"The Clergy of Cronstadt were also there, and when the service according to the Greek Church had been performed, the Admiral rose and read an admirable letter from Prince Galitzin on the prison subject; in which the beloved Monarch's pleasure was declared relative to this Committee. After the letter was read the Admiral delivered an appropriate speech, in which he enlarged on the usefulness of such an institution, and as a stimulus to action he adverted with much feeling to the indefatigable labours of the illustrious *Howard*, whose benevolent career was ended by death at Cherson. By this speech you will perceive that the glorious example of Howard still continues to animate a grateful nation, which seems to seek occasions to do justice to the memory of that great man.* The Rules of the St.

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* The peaceful and happy end of this Philanthropist, as de-

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Petersburgh, Committee were then read and adopted, after which his Excellency, Mr. Papof, addressed the assembly in a very impressive manner. He pleaded the cause of the prisoner with much sympathy and feeling, as it respects both

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lineated in the following official document may not be uninteresting :

Copy of a Report from the *Civil* Governor of Cherson to the *Military* Governor, Count Langeron, dated July 1st, 1817.

" Mr. Howard's life became a sacrifice to his humanity on the 20th of January 1790, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, by the following circumstance. A certain Nobleman named Constadius, who lived in the vicinity of Cherson, had a sister who was attacked with a severe putrid fever. The disease increased from hour to hour and soon overcame the powers of nature. All the physicians gave her over, but Constadius hearing of Howard, came and entreated him to visit his sister. Howard consented, and having examined her, gave it as his opinion also that nothing could be done to prolong her life. Notwithstanding this declaration, the family of Constadius having observed in Howard a man deeply skilled in the art of healing, and of a very enlightened mind, most earnestly intreated him to exert himself to the utmost in behalf of the sick sister. The Philanthropist was unable to resist their entreaties, but continued his visits to the sick person, and was the means of lengthening out her life far beyond what was thought possible—by this means he caught the same disease, and after an illness of eleven days, he died.

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their temporal and spiritual wants, and being just returned from these receptacles of guilt and misery, his words came warm from the heart.

" A liberal subscription was forthwith entered into for the relief of the prisoner, and should they need more pecuniary aid, the St. Petersburgh Committee will help them.

During the time of his illness Admiral Pritzman visited him, when Howard told the Admiral that he felt his death was near, and that he had prepared his will. He requested that at his interment the English burial service might be read, and his remains to be committed to the earth at a distance from the city, there to remain unknown to the human race.

The Admiral observing that he was inclined to be very pensive, endeavoured to change the subject of conversation: but Howard immediately interrupted him, and said, " *The thoughts of death present nothing terrible to me.*" I feel that I must die—to-day—or to-morrow—it is the same. Mutability is the lot of man—a law which the Monarch and the slave must equally obey." Here again he became exceedingly thoughtful, but soon added, " I desire no monument—no inscription—I would only desire that a sun dial might be placed on my grave." He then looked tenderly on those who surrounded his bed—afterward on the beams of the sun—then upon his servant, who had travelled every where with him, and who stood penetrated with grief, and throwing his eyes once more on the by-standers— —He expired."

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" After the meeting, we dined with several of the Members under the hospitable roof of Mr. Berlofsky, with whom we resided. He is the Treasurer of the Bible Society in Cronstadt, and wherever we find a true friend of that kindred Institution, we are sure to find '*a Prison Man.*'

" I must mention, that the Russian Bible Society has resolved to supply the Prison Society with Bibles and Testaments for the use of the prisoners, *gratis*.

" When we had dined, we all visited the Naval Hospital. It occurred to me that the sick were not supplied with the Scriptures, and I proposed that we should take with us a good supply of the four Gospels and the Acts, printed in the Slavonian and Modern Russ. Accordingly Doctor Pinkerton and I supplied every ward through which we passed, being in all fifty-eight. Here also I distributed the remainder of my tracts. *By this plan* 1217 *sick men were furnished with the means of attaining everlasting life.* The poor fellows were soon observed to assemble together in groups, and to press on one another to hear the word of God—some of them with a Tract, and others with a Testament, reading aloud to those who rejoiced to hear the great truths of the gospel. We also visited the Lying-in-Hospital and

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another for unfortunate women, and supplied them with the Holy Scriptures. It would have cheered your heart to have been with us.

" The Emperor proposes to return to his Capital from Warsaw next October, when the plan of the new prison that has been drawn under my direction, will be laid before him, which if his Majesty approves will be carried into execution without delay.

" Thus, my dear friend, the divine blessing seems to attend every step we take in our heavenly work. In this way the labourer is *amply* repaid for his toils. We certainly are indulged in these remarkable times with golden opportunities of doing good—and on a scale so extensive, that we may humbly hope, that in future years it will be productive of greater usefulness, and in comparison of which the present auspicious period may be considered merely as the seed-time.

" In some way or other *we may all be useful,* for where is the city, or town, or village, in which Providence has not permitted to reside the poor, the sick, or the prisoner? From them we are commanded *not* to hide ourselves. On Christian principles we are bound to search them out, and to administer relief and comfort to them as

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far as our ability extends. It is a solemn thought that they will soon be placed beyond the reach of our kindness, and we ourselves may stand chargeable with not having known our blessed and merciful Saviour in those humble forms in which he is still pleased to appear among us. " I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat, sick and in prison and ye visited me not."

" I am now on the eve of my departure from Russia. This morning I called on the dear Prince Galitzin, to take leave of him and to thank him for all his kindness."

He was not merely on the eve of his departure from Russia but his labours were almost completed. It was the exalted privilege of Mr. Venning to have accomplished much in a little time ; and although he deeply deplored his inefficiency, and often looked back with shame that so large a portion of his life should have been spent in vain, yet the contemplative reader will be ready to pause and examine the hand of Providence, which made a single individual the instrument of effecting so much. Now as every effect must have an adequate cause, as the flame cannot perpetually ascend unless the fire be often replenished, *so there must be some secret cause which operated as an impetus to the mind of Mr.*

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Venning. He was continually engaged, and his works were worthy of imitation; hence it becomes a secret worth knowing by what means he was thus actuated.—It might have been considered unfair to reveal this, if he had been still alive, but as he is far removed beyond the praise or censure of mortals, it will not be accounted sacrilege to develope the whole scene. While multitudes were trifling away their precious moments, and bringing down on themselves the everlasting displeasure of Almighty God, he was trimming his lamp, and preparing materials for future usefulness. He enters into his closet, shuts the door, prays to the Father who seeth in secret: reads those remarkable words of the Evangelist, "Jesus saith unto his disciples, Let us go again into Judea. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" and then he writes down the followig meditations, "May I shew the like intrepidity of soul in his service, taking all opportunities of performing the duties of life while the season of it lasts; then when the night of death comes, it will close my eyes in peaceful slumbers, 'till the awful realities of the resurrection burst upon me, and Christ shall take all his faithful servants unto himself for ever."

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This was the sacred fire which fed the hallowed flame. He was "looking unto Jesus!" and the transforming, animating sight operated as a mighty impulse to carry him through his abundant labours.

It is probable there were moments when his faith was severely tried. Every Christian knows something of those painful exercises, but Mr. Venning adopted the divinely appointed method for strengthening his faith and obtaining comfort. His resource was the word of God, as is evident from the following extract. "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid, and Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people who stood by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." Like Jesus may I in all my ways acknowledge God, and maintain a constant dependence on his influence, to be sought by fervent prayer——then I may go to every duty with a courageous and cheerful assurance that he will carry me honourably and comfortably through it. Let us but stedfastly believe, and we shall see the glory of God. He will manifest his power for our help, and when our case appears to be remediless, then is the time for his almighty hand to save."

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On reading such sentiments as these, drawn immediately from the pure fountain of the Scriptures, one can hardly help exclaiming, Precious Bible! May thy sacred influence be felt by every individual of the human race.

It is characteristic of a truly wise man that he endeavours to derive advantage from every passing scene.—Like the bee, he gathers honey from each opening flower. The great Prophet of the church has thus instructed us, for he seized the common events of life to illustrate and enforce the most momentous truths; therefore it is certain that if we learn of him we shall not visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction, or the prisoner in his chains, without reaping from it some advantage to ourselves.

There is no date annexed to the following observations; yet there is little doubt that they were brought forcibly to Mr. Venning's mind by the scenes which were daily before his eyes. "Now the elder son was in the field and as he came and drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing, and he was *angry*, therefore his father said unto him, It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found." Let us who have been restrained from notorious

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crimes not murmur at the little indulgences with which prisoners are treated, for we ourselves know not why it is, *with all our proneness to evil*, that we are made to differ from the worst of them. But let us rather do what we can to render them useful members of society—encourage every symptom that looks like a disposition to keep the commandments of God; and should they be ultimately reclaimed, their having wandered so far from the path of duty, will not abate the joy which is felt among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Thus the Bible was to him a guide, a companion, and a never-failing source of comfort; and as he found it of such supreme importance to himself, so he considered nothing trivial that would facilitate its circulation. During the year 1818 he paid the Treasurer of the Russian Bible Society no less than 1800 rubles, which sum he collected with his own hands from his opulent countrymen. He observed one day to a friend that, "*in some way or other we may all be useful;*" and he verified the assertion by the multifarious methods he adopted for this purpose. There are oblique views of a man's *countenance* which give a prominence to some of his features, and make him appear exceedingly striking. There are also oblique views of a man's *character*,

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and the fact just related places the benevolence of Mr. Venning in such a lovely aspect, as must endear him to the heart of every good man, and should inspire us with our ardent desire to "go and do likewise."

We now approach the last scenes of Mr. Venning's life, which form a striking comment on the words of the Redeemer, "Be ye also ready, for at such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." Having laboured long and successfully in Russia, suitable arrangements were made for his return to his native land. His beloved relatives and friends, from whom he had been long separated, were eagerly expecting him, and anticipating the purest joy from his society—but the meeting never took place. It is reserved for a happier region, where separation is a word unknown, and where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

On Friday, the 6th of August, 1820, he quitted the Metropolis of Russia, and on the following Wednesday, about four in the afternoon, the ship in which he sailed struck on a reef of rocks called *Roth Scar*, near Hogland. An account of this disastrous event was found among his papers, written by himself, the particulars of which are as follow.

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" I was about one hundred miles on my way to Copenhagen, having been previously furnished with suitable letters of introduction from my truly pious and excellent friend Prince Galitzin to powerful persons in Denmark, for the purpose of facilitating the objects I had in view—namely, visiting the prisons and hospitals, and if practicable establishing a Prison Society in Copenhagen; when the American Brig George, in which I had unfortunately embarked, struck on a reef of rocks in the Gulph of Finland. We soon found to our great confusion and terror that the fore-part of the ship was immoveably fixed while the hinder-part was raised and tossed by every wave that struck her, and as each succeeding wave receded, she fell with violence on the pointed rock. In this perilous situation we remained fifteen long hours, often expecting during the night, from the manner in which she beat on the rock, that she would either throw her masts out or go over altogether. Every thing we could think of was done to heave her off—the kedge and bower anchors were carried out astern—the water casks started on deck, and things of little value were thrown overboard; still she would not move. The hatches were then opened, and about one third of her valuable cargo was thrown into the sea; this was a painful sight to me, but to the Captain it was heart-rending, for he de-

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clared that all he had in the world was invested in the goods he had just committed to the waves, and that now he was a ruined man. Notwithstanding all this she remained firmly attached to her station, although, as she became lighter, she beat more violently than ever, and made the danger of our lives increasingly apparent. The Captain expressed his sorrow at bringing me into such a situation, and said that he had determined to abandon her, and take to the boats for our lives. He was now much affected and burst into tears. I urged him to suppress his feelings, as such a state of mind was calculated to sink the spirits of the sailors, at a moment when all their skill and courage would be required to manage the boats. He felt the force of my observation, and we jumped into the long boat with four of the sailors—the other five, for we were eleven in all, took the jolly boat. In the hurry of pushing off we forgot the compass, and what was worse, the long boat was without a rudder, and almost unfit for service; we were therefore under the necessity of fastening the two boats together at a proper distance. We had neither wine nor brandy, for the Captain considered it dangerous to take any, as it might be difficult to restrain the men from taking too much. Half a pail of fresh water was the whole of our stock, and we did not know how far or how long we should

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have to row. Vessels were seen passing towards the *Sound*, but at such a distance from us that we could only just see them. We attempted to reach the nearest of them, but they all passed by without perceiving us, although we attempted to make ourselves as conspicuous as possible, by hoisting the American flag, which was fastened to the end of an oar which the master held in his hand as high as he could. At last we saw a ship afar off coming the opposite way under full sail—now was the time for us to make an effort—every energy was used to get as near as possible, and most happily she bore down upon us, and beholding us in this pitiable state she backed her sails and picked us up.

"After we were on board we were informed that the Captain and two of the men were sick of a fever, but had the plague been in the ship I would not have left her.

"We soon found that she was the Aurora, Captain Lutching, a Bremen vessel, from Antwerp to Cronstadt, and the wind being fair she arrived safely thither the next day.

"At Cronstadt I was taken seriously ill, and was so reduced by fever and other complaints, that I had scarcely strength to cross the room.

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My good brother, accompanied by my kind friend Mr. W. Rutt, came down to see me, so that I had every possible attention and care, which together with the blessing of God, soon restored me so far that I could proceed to my brother's country house. When my dear friends, Prince Galitzin and his Excellency Mr. Papof, heard I was there, they came down to see me, and their kindness I shall not soon forget.

" Having completely recovered, I took my passage again for Copenhagen with an intention to proceed thence to London, but when the ship was ready to sail I was unwell again and unable to go in her."

The above is dated December 1820, and his journal contains only one paper of a later date. It is declarative of his abhorrence of the awful prevalent and ruinous practice of *drunkenness*. Whether it was ever presented to the person for whom it was intended, is uncertain; but as these appear to be the last lines he ever penned, it will be gratifying to preserve them. " It has often cheered my mind," he writes, " to reflect on the progress of the Bible Society, and Prison Society, which are placed under the fostering care of the beloved Emperor Alexander, by which the bread of life is widely distributed among all classes of

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men within the extensive dominions of the Russian empire—yea this heavenly light has even penetrated the territory of Satan—the abodes of the wretched victims of guilt and misery: But while I rejoice in the prospect of a fruitful harvest from the preparations thus making, yet I cannot avoid expressing my apprehensions that the good effects of these labours will be greatly counteracted by the habit of drinking spirituous liquors. This is no less prevalent in England, than in Russia, and no less destructive in its consequences; for it is a striking fact which has lately been ascertained, that no less than one-eighth of the population of London die prematurely by dram drinking. The subject has been brought before a Committee of the House of Commons, and by the Records of that House it appears in evidence, the most horrid murders which disgrace humanity have been committed by monsters who are addicted to drunkenness. That this habit has gained ground in Russia to a great extent cannot be doubted—and it is equally remarkable that in Russia as well as England, offenders become ripened in crime by this sinful and pernicious propensity.

"The cheap and easy rate at which the *peasant* may procure this moral and physical poison is certainly the cause of its being carried to such an

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amazing degree, and until this polluted stream be dried up by the wisdom of Government, the Bible with its prohibition that "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven," will, it is feared be read in vain."

About three weeks before Mr. Venning's death, he went as usual to the prison, accompanied by another member of the visiting Committee. At this time there was a man in the prison dangerously ill of a typhus fever, and both the visitors caught the disorder. The other gentleman was first seized, and soon discovered symptoms of typhus. The physicians gave him over, but he recovered, and is still actively engaged in his benevolent labours. Mr. Venning's complaint began with a cold, which rapidly increased, and for the last ten days of his life he was confined to his bed.

On Thursday 6th (18th) January, he earnestly entreated his brother to send for Doctor Paterson and myself. Doctor Paterson was not at home when the message arrived, but I immediately went, and as I entered his room he said to me, "I sent for Doctor Paterson and you, because it is my earnest desire to have you with me—it is right I should have those with me *now* with whom I hope to dwell for ever. The phy-

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sicians tell me that I am not very ill, but I think I am—I feel that I am. True it may not be dangerous, but that is uncertain; God only knows what the event may be—it may terminate in death, may it not?" "Uncertainty," I replied, "is engraven on all terrestrial things; but I trust you will soon be restored, and have many years of usefulness added to your life." He paused for a moment—and then replied with much energy, "Yes, I hope so too, there is nothing else that makes life desirable, but it is probable that all my work is done, and this idea induced me to send for you——we shall be companions in eternity.—*If we are Christians indeed, we shall be angels in the world to come.* I insist on it that you visit me, and let nothing prevent it."

Seeing him rather anxious I said, "My dear friend, make yourself quite easy on that subject, I will come to see you daily." At this his countenance wore a smile, and with much apparent pleasure he said, "Will you! Then I am satisfied." Perceiving his eyes directed toward the table, I asked him if he wanted any thing? "Yes," he replied, give me *that* book—look at that page—fold down the leaf, and recollect that I give to you as *my charge*, that if the disease increase, and death is approaching, you read to

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me that Chapter: it has afforded me much pleasure, and comfort already, and I hope it will again: put it in your pocket." It was Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the soul, and the Chapter entitled, "The Christian rejoicing in the view of death and judgment."

The person in attendance now gave him some refreshment, after which he lay in a composed state for some time—all was silent, and I hoped he was going to sleep, when fixing his eyes on me he said, "Knill, I have seen very little of you since your arrival in Petersburg. I am sorry this should be the case, why was it?" I answered we have had our appropriate work, and each of us has been labouring in his own sphere——— "Yes, yes," said he, "it is all well; yes, it is all well, *this affliction is well also; I have not been so spiritually minded as I ought to have been, and as we all ought to be*——may God grant that this affliction may be made a blessing to me."

On the Saturday following, which was the last time I saw him, he said to me in the most solemn and affecting manner, "There is a great work going on, and all of it is preparing for the judgment day; there it will be tried: What a scrutiny! What a day!" I made no reply; but he

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looked as if he anticipated an answer, when I said, " That day will be the most joyful and glorious you have ever seen." " Yes, if I am saved," he replied. It was then observed, " All who believe in Jesus shall be saved; and you have believed, have you not?" " O yes."— " Christ is the only Refuge, and you have fled to Him, have you not?" " He is my only Refuge." " Christ is the foundation of his Church, and for many years you have been resting on him, have you not?"—" Yes, O yes, this subject has occupied my mind a good deal this morning, and very pleasant it has been to my soul." I replied, " Let us thank God for this mercy." Fearing that he might be exhausted, I endeavoured to turn his thoughts to another subject, and remarked I saw your friend ——— to-day, and he was much rejoiced to hear you were better. He smiled and said, " O, did he." I then spoke to him of the recovery of another of his friends, to which he replied, " I am very glad." I now arose to come away. He perceived it, and said, " What! are you going to leave me!——you shall not leave me—stop, I wish to say to you, Knill, labour for Jesus Christ as long as you have breath in your body." It entered my very soul. I felt it as a voice from the tomb! " Yes," said I, " that is my desire; I have devoted myself to his service: for this

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cause I left my native land."——"That is right," he replied, "Christ is worthy: Christ is worthy: Preach the pure Gospel—warn every man to beware of trusting in his own righteousness. O what a day is coming! What a day will the judgment day be! What scenes will then appear! You know there is a propensity in men to trust in themselves; but warn them. O could I but give you a view of my thoughts on that subject."—"Do not attempt it," I said—"No, no, I will not," he replied, "the subject is too vast—but this let me tell you, that dreadful beyond description will it be for all those who are not placing all their hopes of heaven on the *Lord Jesus Christ.*"

I again arose to come away. "What," said he, "Will you go, I have more to tell you." "Yes," said I, "But you wish me to preach; and how can that be, if you prevent me from going home to prepare my sermons." He then held out his hand, and with much composure and complacency took a last farewell. After this he spoke very little, but rapidly sunk under his disease, and on Monday the 22d of January 1821, he expired. Doctor Paterson and some other Christian friends were present, praying for an easy dismission at the moment when the spirit took its flight to realms of day.

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Here Reader for a moment pause, and meditate on the unutterable felicity of heaven. How great must be the joy of the spirits of the just made perfect!

"Once they were mourning here below,
"And wet their couch with tears;
"They wrestled hard, as we do now,
"With sins, and doubts, and fears."

But now their faith is changed to sight. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat, for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." May this be the everlasting portion of all who read these pages, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Amen.

On the Saturday after Mr. Venning died, his remains were committed to the dust. That a man of such transcendant benevolence should be favoured with the esteem of persons of the most exalted character, will not be thought strange, and that he did possess their esteem is certain both in his life and after he had ceased to breathe.

The influence, patronage, and support, which he acquired, are a stiking part of his history, and

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speak volumes in behalf of the candour and kindness of the country in which he died.

To mature his plans he was sure of the advice of Count Leiven. To forward his designs relative to building, His Excellency D'junkofsky always assisted him: and in order that it might be carried on with promptitude he could have access to Count Miloradovitch the Military Governor. When any peculiarly distressing case was brought to him, which called for immediate relief, he had always an able and willing co-adjutor in Baron Vittinghoff.*

His Excellency Mr. Papof had a high regard for him as a man, but especially as a Christian.

The Prime Minister favoured him with his

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* At the commencement of Mr. Venning's labours this distinguished Nobleman took him from prison to prison in his own carriage, almost daily—accompanied him to the various wards—frequently suggesting the most useful plans—always sympathizing with the miserable—and stepping forward with his characteristic promptitude to meet and to mitigate every case of suffering that came to his view. The Baron not only afforded Mr. V. the most prompt and indefatigable aid, but invariably acted toward him as a father and a brother: and whenever it shall please the Almighty to remove him from the present world, St. Petersburg will lose one of its chief Philanthropists.

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most cordial friendship. And he was honoured with the acquaintance of his Imperial Majesty.

Persons of rank and of different nations, assembled at his funeral to pay their last tribute of respect to his memory—among whom were:

His Excellency Sir Charles Bagott, the British Ambassador with his Suite; The Gentlemen of the British Factory; and other Gentlemen of his own nation.

His Excellency Prince Galitzin, Prime Minister of Russia, with many other Russian Noblemen, General Gorgoley, Master of Police, and all the Members of the Prison Committee.

A few days after his funeral the Prison Committee held their annual Meeting, when the illustrious President addressed the Ladies and Gentlemen as follows:

TRANSLATION.

"At this days meeting of the Committee of the Society for prisons, the heart of every member present, is no doubt filled with sorrow at missing in our circle, our worthy and highly esteemed colleague, Mr. Walter Venning."

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" His soul, filled with pure love, devoted to the Saviour, and to the service of those confined in prisons—inflamed with the perpetual desire of helping suffering humanity in whatever circumstances it came before him, is now departed, and we hope entered on a more extensive course of action, conformable to the good course which it had chosen in the vale of tears, of sickness, and of death."

" Bowing therefore with reverence before the inscrutable decrees of Him, who, governing universal nature, condescends to regard every one of the sons of men, but especially those who by his grace are become children of God, we need not to sorrow concerning him *as those who have no hope.* The change in his state, as it respects himself neither demands, nor ought to have our commisseration, and as it regards the unfortunate, of whom he was the zealous protector, unwearied intercessor, and anxious parent, his example is a sure pledge for imitation —— a plant which has taken deep root and which will doubtless put forth new branches. Other friends of humanity, ready to devote themselves for the deliverance of such as are perishing by the effects of sin, ignorance, and corruption, will come forward and strive to lighten their burdens—supply their wants, exhort, mollify, solace, and protect them."

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" But to *us* there remains more than his example. The very existence of our Committee and of the Society in St. Petersburg is a living monument of his unparalleled zeal to ameliorate the condition of prisoners, to disseminate good principles and promote holiness among the vicious and condemned——to contend with hell itself and eternal destruction for the prey already consigned over to them and in their jaws, to rescue it from inevitable ruin, by pointing out the way to salvation and eternal felicity.

" Since the year 1817 he has resided in Russia, and though little known or rather altogether unknown at first, it may be said that he himself thus performed the work of a whole Society. With the highest permission granted to him, he examined the state of the prisons, houses of correction and poor-houses, in St. Petersburg, Twer and Moscow. Many reforms and improvements were made according to his suggestions, and a particular attention was thereby excited toward this department.

" His indefatigable exertions to promote the establishment of a Society for the prisons here were at last crowned with success. On the 19th of July 1819, his Imperial Majesty was pleased to give being to such a Society, and the act con-

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cerning its formation testifies that Mr. Venning was the first person who started the idea among us of such a beneficent institution.

" His joy and exultation at this event, so much longed for by him, seemed to make an impression on his very existence. From that period a certain kind of sacred bond seemed to unite him to Russia.

" Last year he was a co-operator in the establishment of a Prison Committee at Cronstadt, and although his active love for suffering humanity excited him subsequently to resolve on visiting England, and other places, where he expected to exert himself in a new sphere of usefulness, yet he always proposed in his mind to return again to Russia. At last he took his departure for Denmark, with a view to endeavour to form a Prison Society there, but it is well known, that by the ship being wrecked in a storm, on board of which he was, his voyage was prevented, and that only by a special act of a gracious Providence, he was saved from the most imminent danger amidst the raging waves of the sea, and brought back again to St. Petersburg.

" After this, notwithstanding the shock that

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his health had sustained, he ceased not during the whole autumn to look out for a fit opportunity to depart; but adverse winds obliged him to remain here.

" Thus the Almighty disposer of events ordained that he should lay down the frail tabernacle of his body here, in order to be clothed with an eternal one not made with hands——that he should here finish his earthly career, in order to commence another in our Father's kingdom which is on high."

" Honourable Gentlemen and Ladies! Out of love and merited esteem for the memory of our deceased Colleague, I have a proposal to make, to which you will doubtless all accede; that you allow me to make known the decease of Mr. Venning to his Imperial Majesty, and to ask the gracious permission of his Majesty to erect, on the spot where the mortal remains of this friend of mankind rest, a humble yet becoming monument in testimony of the meek Christian qualities and labours of the deceased—and of the esteem of the Members of the St. Petersburg Committee of the Society for Prisons, for his memory, towards the establishment of which Society he was the most active instrument.

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"Not splendor, nor vain show, nor empty eulogy ought to constitute the symbols of this monument, but a simplicity which shall speak to the heart and excite to pious reflection.

"While Russia has to shew near one frontier the ashes of his countryman, who marked the first traces of amelioration in the condition of prisoners and of the sick and suffering, let her also shew another monument of a *Second Howard—here*, a worthy follower and emulator of the good deeds of the *first*. The Lord blesseth his work when he bestows the instruments of his grace on the earth; the Lord has accomplished his work when he taketh them to himself in heaven."

This testimony to Mr. Venning's faith and love, and zeal, and holiness, was soon followed by a similar testimony from the Prison Society in London.

"At a Meeting of the Committee held on Monday the 19th February, 1821,

"SAML. HOARE, Junr. Esq. in the Chair."

"The Chairman informed the Committee that it was his painful duty to communicate to

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them the serious loss the Society had sustained by the decease of one of their most valuable members, Mr. Walter Venning, who died at St. Petersburg, on the 22d January, from a fever contracted in visiting one of the gaols of that city.

"It was Resolved,

That the Committee received this melancholy intelligence with feelings of deep concern and sincere sorrow. The ardent and benevolent zeal which Mr. Venning uniformly manifested in the service of the Society, renders his death a loss peculiarly severe if not irreparable.

"Mr. Venning joined the Committee soon after the formation of the Society, and very essentially contributed by his exertions to the success of its labours. He was indefatigable in visiting the gaols of the metropolis, and ever earnest in his endeavours to restore the criminal, but especially the youthful offender to the paths of Religion and virtue.

During his late residence in Russia, a period of nearly four years, his time has been unceasingly devoted to the amelioration of the gaols in that country. He presented to the Emperor

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Alexander a Memorial forcibly pointing out the great national benefits that result from the improvement of Prison Discipline, and the wisdom and practicability of rendering punishment the means of Reformation.

" The justice of these views was acknowledged; and to carry them into execution, a Society was formed at St. Petersburg under the imperial sanction.

" This Society has been productive of extensive good, by introducing improvements in the construction of places of confinement—and regulations calculated to preserve the health and to promote the moral and religious interests of the criminal. It is needless to add that in these philanthropic labours Mr. Venning eminently shared; and long, very long, will the wretched and the guilty, confined in the prisons of the Russian empire, have reason to revere his name and bless his memory.

" The Committee having thus briefly adverted to the public services of their deceased friend, might here close; but they cannot forbear to indulge for one moment in the remembrance of those Christian virtues and that unaffected meekness which distinguished his life and

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adorned his character. In prosecuting his public labours, his conduct was marked by undeviating firmness. No prospect of personal danger, or consideration of personal ease could induce him to relax in his noble efforts. He sacrificed health, interest, comfort, and society, to encounter vice, misery, disease, and even death.

" Like Howard he was devoted to the task of assuaging the miseries and promoting the improvement of his fellow creatures; and, like him, he fell a victim to his exertions.

" Yet although steady, and inflexible, and persevering, in the pursuit of duty, his heart was formed of tenderness, and ever alive to its softest appeals. The most wretched might claim his sympathy and assistance, nor would he spare any effort to reform the vicious and befriend the forsaken. His life was regulated by that religion whose fruits are " love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

" The Committee cannot deny themselves the mournful satisfaction of placing on their Minutes this feeble testimony to the honoured memory of their departed friend, thus cut off in the midst of usefulness and in the prime of life; and while

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they humbly confide in the goodness of a gracious God, to raise up instruments to supply the loss thus occasioned by death, they would deeply impress on their own minds the necessity of increased exertion in the service of humanity, and the importance of labouring stedfastly in the cause, " while it is day, seeing, that the night cometh when no man can work." *

The reader is now in possession of all that was most valuable in the life of Mr. Venning. It can hardly be expected that this publication will " quicken or edify thousands," yet it may be hoped that a few will rise from its perusal, with their hearts enflamed with love to the Redeemer, and be determined in his strength to live more devotedly to the divine glory.

Perhaps some beloved Parents may be encouraged by this example to train up their dear children in the fear of God. Some interesting

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* The substance of this honourable testimony was introduced into the Report, presented at the Annual Meeting of Subscribers and Friends to the Society, for the improvement of Prison Discipline, and for the Reformation of juvenile offenders, held at Free Mason's Hall, on Saturday, June 2, 1821, H. R. H. The Duke of Gloucester, K. G. Patron, in the Chair.

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youth who is now living as Walter Venning once did, may be led to flee from the paths of the destroyer, and to seek that Saviour whom he sought and found to his eternal joy.

It only remains to add that the Monument has been erected, according to the idea suggested by the Prince Galitzin. "Not splendour, nor vain show, nor empty eulogy constitute its symbols, but a simplicity which speaks to the heart and excites to pious reflection. On the principal side, under the bas-relief representing Mr. Walter Venning entering into a prison, with a Bible in one hand, is the following inscription, in two compartments; one in Russ and the other in English.

"I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in Prison, and ye came unto me.

"And I heard a voice from Heaven, saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

On the reverse side, in Russ only is the following inscription.

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TRANSLATION.

"The Society of St. Petersburg, for the improvement of Prisons, have raised this monument to the Memory of their beloved co-labourer, WALTER VENNING, co-patriot of Howard, and founder of the Prison Institutions of this country. He was born in November, 1781, and died in the Lord Jesus Christ, on the 10th of January, 1821.

The annexed engraving is an exact resemblance of the Monument.

It is probable that most of the readers of this little volume may have no monumental pillar raised over their sleeping dust, but every faithful servant of Christ will have that which is infinitely better—the approbation of The Eternal: and will unite with angels, and archangels, and all the glorious company of heaven in ascribing glory and honour, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and power, and might unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.—Amen."

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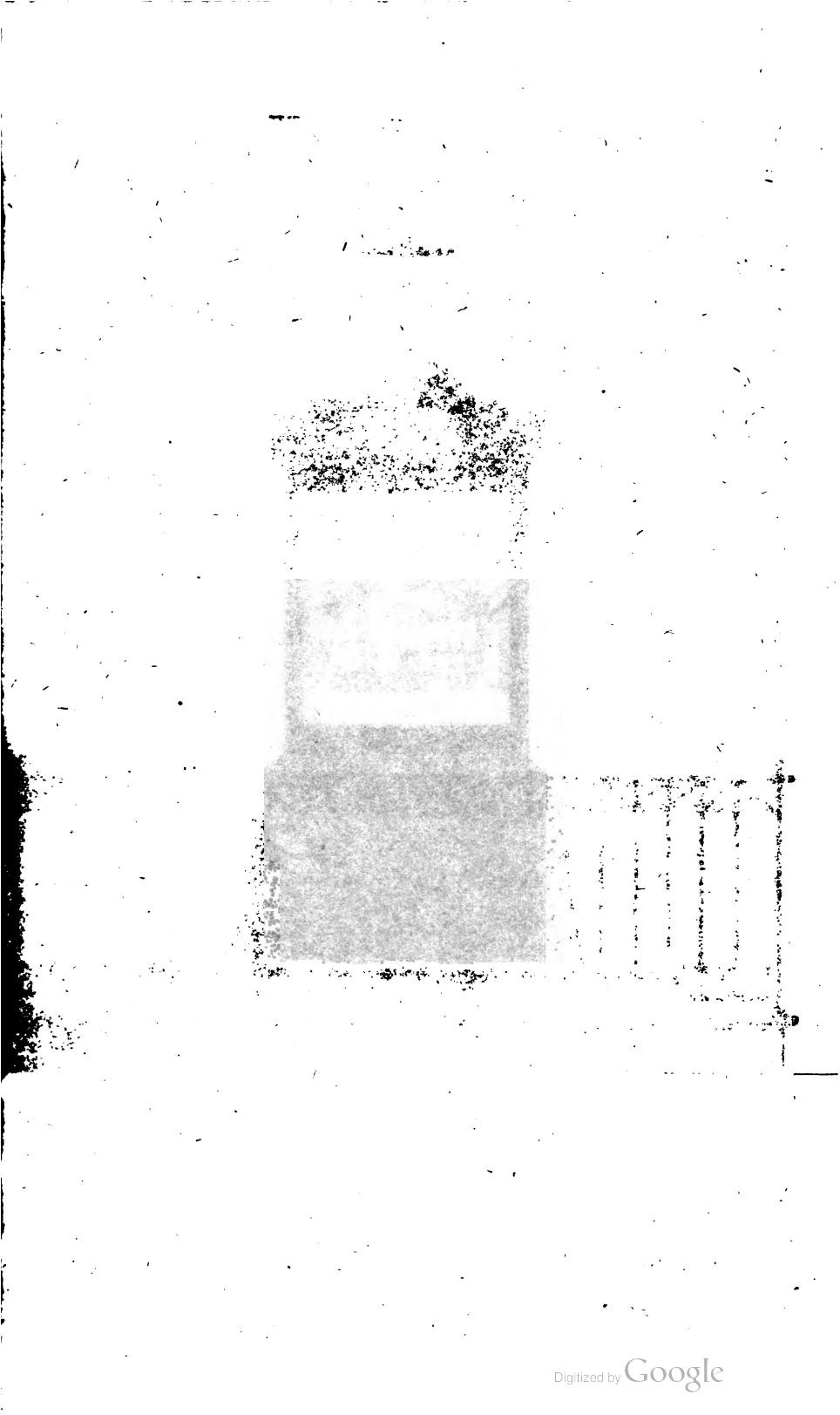

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ERRATA.

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21, line 10 from the top, *for* the, *read* his.
29, line 4 from the bottom, *for* were, *read* was.
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